Mr. HARRIS's

First Sermon

OR

Mr. BOYLE's Lecture

Immorality *and* Pride,

The Great Cauſes of

ATHEISM.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

CATHEDRAL-CHURCH of St. *Paul*,
January the 3d. 169⅞.

BEING

The Firſt of the LECTURE for that Year,
Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Eſq;

By *JOHN HARRIS*, M. A.
and Fellow of the ROYAL-SOCIETY.

LONDON,
Printed by *J. L.* for *Richard Wilkin*, at the
King's-Head in St. *Paul's Church-Yard*, 1698.

UMI

TO THE

Most Reverend Father in God

THOMAS

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*;

Sir HENRY ASHURST Baronet;
Sir JOHN ROTHERAM Serjeant at Law;
JOHN EVELYN Senior Esquire;

Trustees appointed by the Will of the Honorable *ROBERT BOYLE* Esquire.

Most Reverend and Honoured,

AS I had the Honour to Preach this Sermon by your Kind and Generous Appointment, so I now Publish it in Obedience to your Commands, and humbly offer it, as also my ensuing Discourses, to your Candid Patronage and Acceptance. I have (in pursuance of Your Grace's direction) studied to be as Plain and Intelligible as possibly I could,

and ſhall, by the Divine Aſſiſtance, proſecute my whole Deſign *after the ſame manner; which Method of Treating this Subject, appears very Suitable to the Pious and Excellent Deſign of Our Noble and Honourable Founder.*

I humbly deſire your Prayers to Almighty God, that He will vouchſafe to render my weak Endeavours effectual to ſhew the Groundleſsneſs and Inconcluſiveneſs of thoſe Objections *which Atheiſtical Men uſually bring againſt the great and Important Truths of Religion; which is the End they are ſincerely directed to, by*

Moſt Reverend and Honoured,

Your moſt obliged

humble Servant,

HARRIS.

Psalm X. 4.

The Wicked through the Pride of his Countenance, will not seek after God: Neither is God in all his Thoughts.

IN this Psalm is Contained a very lively Description of the Insolence of Atheistical and Wicked Men, when once they grow Powerful and Numerous; for then, as we read at the Third Verse, they will proceed so far, as openly *to boast of and glory in* their Impiety: They will boldly *defie and contemn the great God* of Heaven and Earth, v. 13. They will *deny his Providence*, v. 11. *and despise his Vengeance*: And, as we are told in these words of my Text, They will grow so Proud and high, as to scorn to pay him any Honour or Worship, to Pray to him or *Call upon him*; but will endeavour to banish the very Thoughts of his Being out of their Minds. *The Wicked through the Pride of his*, &c.

In which words, we have an Account more particularly, by what *Methods* and *Steps* Men advance to such an Exorbitant height of Wickedness, as to set up for Atheism, and to deny the Existence of a God; for there are in them these Three Particulars, which I shall consider in their Order.

I. Here is the general Character or Qualifications of the Person the Psalmist speaks of; which is, That *he is a Wicked Man. The Wicked through the Pride*, &c. II. The

II. The *particular kind of Wickedneſs*, or the *Origin* from whence the Spirit of Atheiſm and Irreligion doth chiefly proceed; And *That is Pride. The Wicked through the Pride of his Countenance*, &c. And,

III. Here is the *great Charge* that is brought againſt this Wicked and Proud Man; viz. *Wilful Atheiſm and Infidelity: He will not ſeek after God: Neither is God in all his Thoughts:* Or, as it is in the Margin of our Bibles, with good Warrant from the Hebr. *All his Thoughts are there is no God.*

In diſcourſing on the two Firſt of theſe Heads, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that *Immorality* and *Pride* are the great Cauſes of the Growth of Atheiſm amongſt us: And on the Third, I ſhall conſider the Objections that Atheiſtical Men uſually bring againſt the being of a Deity, and ſhew how very weak and invalid they are.

And firſt I think it very Neceſſary to ſay ſomething of *the Cauſes* of Infidelity and Atheiſm, and to ſhew how it comes to paſs that Men can poſſibly arrive to ſo great a height of Impiety. This my Text naturally leads me to, before I can come to the great Subject I deſign to Diſcourſe upon; and I hope it may be of very good uſe to diſcover *the Grounds* of this heinous Sin, and the *Methods* and *Steps* by which Men advance to it; that ſo thoſe who are not yet hardened in it, nor quite given up to a Reprobate Mind, may, by the Bleſſing of God, take heed, and avoid being engaged in ſuch Courſes as do naturally lead into it.

I. Therefore

I. Therefore let us conſider the general Character or Qualifications of the Perſon here ſpoken of in my Text, And that is, that he is a *Wicked Man. The wicked through the Pride*, &c.

And this is every where the Language of the Sacred Scripture, when it ſpeaks of Atheiſtical Men. *David* tells us (*Pſal.* 14. 1. and 51. 1.) that 'tis the *Fool* (i.e. the *Wicked Man*, for ſo the word *Nabal* often ſignifies, and is ſo *here* to be underſtood) 'Tis he that hath ſaid *in his heart there is no God.* 'Tis ſuch an one as is a *Fool* by his own fault; one ſtupified and dull'd by Vice and Luſt, as he ſufficiently explains it afterwards; *one that is corrupt and become filthy, and that hath done abominable works.* So the Apoſtle St. *Paul* ſuppoſes, that thoſe Men *will have in them an evil heart of unbelief*, who do *depart from the living God*, and *live without him in the world.* And indeed, it is very Natural to conclude, That thoſe which are once debauched in their *Practices*, may eaſily grow ſo in their *Principles:* For when once 'tis a Man's Intereſt that there ſhould be no God, he will readily enough disbelieve his Exiſtence: We always give our aſſent very precipitantly to what we wiſh for, and would have to be true. A Man oppreſſed with a Load of Guilt, and conſcious to himſelf, that he is daily obnoxious to the Divine Vengeance, will be often very uneaſie, reſtleſs, and diſſatisfied with himſelf, and his Mind muſt be filled with Diſmal and Ill-boding Thoughts. He is unwilling to leave his Sins, and to forego the preſent Advantage of Senſual Pleaſure; and yet

he cannot but be fearful too, of the Puniſhments of a Future State, and vehemently diſturbed now and then, *about the account that he muſt one day give of his Actions.*

Now, 'tis very Natural for a Man under ſuch Circumſtances, to catch at any thing that doth but *ſeem* to offer him a little Eaſe and Quiet, and that can help him to ſhake off his melancholy Apprehenſion of impending Puniſhment and Miſery. Some therefore bear down all Thought and Conſideration of their Condition, in an uninterrupted enjoyment of Senſual Delights, and quite ſtupifie and drown their Conſcience and Reaſon in continual Exceſſes and Debauchery; and thus very many commence Atheiſts, out of downright Sottiſhneſs and Stupidity, and come at laſt to *believe* nothing of the Truths of Religion, becauſe they never *think* any thing about it, nor *underſtand* any thing of it. Others, who have been a little enured to thinking, and have gotten ſome ſmall ſmattering in the ſuperficial Parts of Learning, will endeavour to defend their wicked Practices by ſome pretence to Reaſon and Argument. Theſe will one while juſtifie their Actions, by forced and wreſted Citations and Explications of ſome particular Texts of Scripture; at another time they will ſhroud themſelves under the Examples of the Prevarications of ſome great Men in Sacred Scripture, as a Licence to them, to be guilty of the ſame or the like wicked Acts; without conſidering at all, of their great Penitence afterwards. Sometimes they will diſpute the Eternity of Hell Torments, deny that their Soul ſhall ſurvive

ſurvive the Body, and pleaſe themſelves with the glorious hopes of being utterly annihilated. Now they will argue againſt the Freedom of their *own Wills*; and by and by, againſt that of the *Divine Nature*: and from *both* conclude, that there can be no harm nor evil in what they do, becauſe they are abſolutely neceſſitated to every thing they commit. But againſt all this precarious ſtuff, the Sacred Scriptures do yet appear and afford a ſufficient Refutation. The next Step therefore muſt be to *quarrel* at, and *expoſe* them; to pretend that there are *Abſurdities*, *Contradictions* and *Inconſiſtencies* in them: To aſſert that the Religion they contain, is nothing but a meer Human and Political Inſtitution, and the Invention of a Crafty and deſigning Order of Men, to promote their own Intereſt and Advantage; but that they are of no manner of Divine Authority, nor Univerſal Obligation. And when once they get thus far, they begin to be at Liberty; now they can purſue their vicious Inclinations without controul of their Conſciences, or the Conviction of God's holy Word, and are got above the Childiſh Fears of Eternal Miſery. By this time, the true and through *Calenture* of Mind begins; they grow now deliriouſly enamoured with the feign'd Products of their own Fancies; and theſe Notions appear to them now, adorned with ſuch bright and radiant Colours, and ſo beautiful and glorious, that they will ruſh headlong into this *Fools Paradiſe*, though Eternal Deſtruction be at the bottom; for now they ſtick at nothing; They Retrench the Deity of all his Attributes, abſolutely deny his Preſidence over the Affairs of the World,

and make him nothing but a kind of *neceſſary and blind Cauſe of things*, *Nature*, *the Soul of the World*, or ſome ſuch word, which they have happened to meet with in the Ancient Heathen Writers. But they Profeſs that 'tis impoſſible to have any *Idæa* of him at all; and what they cannot conceive or have an *Idæa* of, they ſay is *nothing*, and by Conſequence there can be no ſuch thing as a God. This, or ſuch like, I'm perſwaded is the uſual Method, by which theſe kind of Men advance to abſolute Infidelity and Atheiſm: And in this, they are every ſtep confirmed and eſtabliſhed by the ſeeming Wit, and real Boldneſs, with which Atheiſtical Men dreſs up their Arguments and Diſcourſes; and of which, if they were ſtripped and diveſted, their weakneſs and inconcluſiveneſs muſt needs appear to every one. But the Mirth and Humour, and that Surpriſing and Extravagant Vein of talking which always abounds in the Company of ſuch Men, ſo ſuits and agrees with his own vicious Inclinations, that he becomes eaſily prejudiced againſt the Truth of Religion, and any Obligation to its Precepts and Injunctions: And ſo he will ſoon reſolve *to ſeek no more after God*, but will employ all his Thoughts to prove that there is no ſuch Being in the World.

But on the other hand, it appears wholly impoſſible for a Man to arrive at ſuch a pitch as abſolute Infidelity and Atheiſm, if he hath been virtuouſly Educated, and be enclined to live a Sober and a Moral Life. For there is certainly nothing that Religion enjoins, but what is exactly agreeable to

to the Rules of Morality and Virtue; nothing but what is conformable to right Reaſon and Truth; nothing but what is ſubſtantially good and pleaſant, and nothing but what will approve it ſelf to a thinking Mind, as certainly conducing to the good of Human Society, and to every one's Quiet, Eaſe, and Happineſs here in this Life: And over and above this, it gives us an aſſurance of a glorious Immortality in the World to come.

Now, Can it be imagined, that any ſober and virtuous Man, and one that is not prejudiced by the Inducements of Senſual Pleaſure, if he ſeriouſly conſiders things, will not be induced to take upon him the Profeſſion of our holy Religion: and with all due Gratitude to our Gracious God, accept of ſo vaſt a Reward as this of Eternal Happineſs? Eſpecially too when it is for doing that only out of a *true Principle of Religion*, which it is ſuppoſed he was inclined to perform without it, by the *Principles of Reaſon and Honour*. A Man that is enclined to live virtuouſly, juſtly, temperately, and peaceably in this preſent World, will ſoon be ſatisfied, if he read the Holy Scriptures, that it is *this* which lies at the Bottom of all Revealed Religion, and for whoſe Advancement and Propagation among Mankind, all that gracious Diſpenſation was contrived and delivered to us. What reaſon can therefore be poſſibly aſſigned, why ſuch a Perſon ſhould disbelieve the *Truths* of Religion? Is not a deſire of Happineſs ſo Natural to us, that 'tis the great Inducement of all our Actions? and will not every Man aim to get as much of this as he can, according to the Notion

he

he hath of it? what is there then that can prejudice such a Man's Mind against the Belief and Expectation of a future Reward at the hand of God? Is it not Natural to embrace any offer that proposes to us a great Advantage? and are not we very ready to believe the Truth of any thing that is advanced of that Nature? The Great Truths therefore of Religion, containing nothing impossible, absurd or improbable in them, and exhibiting to him Infinite Advantages on such easie Conditions, must needs be the delightful Objects of a *Good* and *Virtuous* Man's Faith. He, indeed, that hath just Grounds to fear that his Irregular Life will incapacitate him for the Favour of God, and the Joys of another World, may be willing, and at last infatuated so far, as really to disbelieve what he knows he cannot obtain. But one that is of a Moral, Sober and Virtuous Disposition, can never be supposed to be so unaccountably absurd, as to commence Atheist contrary to his *Interest*, his *Inclination*, and his *Reason*.

And as 'tis hardly possible to conceive a Person can be an Atheist, without being first *Wicked*; so it appears as difficult to imagine, that if he be an Atheist, he should not continue to be *so*. I know the Contrary is often pretended; *viz.* That one that believes nothing of a God or Religion, may yet be, and often is guided by a Principle of *Reason and Honour, and will do to others as he would be done unto himself*: Such an one (*it is said*) will be satisfied of the Necessity of Humane Laws, and of the Advantages that do thence arise to Mankind: He will think himself obliged to submit to the Laws of his

his Country, and conſequently will keep up to the Rules of common Juſtice and Honeſty; and this (ſay they) is enough, and all that Religion can pretend to enjoin. (*a*) There is a late French Author, that endeavours to maintain by Arguments and Examples, that the Principles of Atheiſm do not neceſſarily lead to Vice and Immorality. But in the Proof of this, he comes very ſhort of his Deſign. He alledges, That *ſome* Profeſſing Chriſtianity have always, and do ſtill, live as bad Lives and as wickedly as any Atheiſts whatſoever can do: And that ſome Atheiſts have lived very Regularly and Morally. But what then? Allowing and granting all this; it doth not in the leaſt follow that Atheiſm doth not lead to Immorality and a Corruption of Manners. For it is neither aſſerted that Atheiſm is the *only way* of becoming Wicked; nor that an Atheiſt muſt neceſſarily be guilty *of all manner of Vice*. No doubt very many Men betake themſelves to a ſinful Courſe, without having any Principles to juſtifie themſelves by, as the Atheiſt pretends to: But are drawn into Wickedneſs purely by Incogitancy and want of Conſideration. And ſuch kind of Perſons, though they make an outward Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, yet they may be, and doubtleſs often are, as Vicious and Immoral as any other Men, without ever arriving at the Point of *Speculative Atheiſm*, or perhaps without ever ſo much as doubting of the Being of a God, of the Truth of Religion, or of a Future State of Rewards and Puniſhments. No one ſaith alſo that an Atheiſt muſt neceſſarily be guilty of *all manner of Vice and Immorality*: But 'tis plain enough, that his Principles lead him to proſecute *any vicious Inclination* that is ſuitable

(*a*) *Penſees diverſes Ecrites à un Docteur de* Sorbonne *à l'Occaſion de la Comète qui parut au Mois de* Decembre, 1680. Rotterdam. 8vo.

to

to him, and to do *any thing* that he can ſafely, to procure to himſelf that kind of Happineſs or Satisfaction he propoſes to enjoy. Many Sins are diſagreeable to ſome particular Periods and Circumſtances of a Man's Life, to his Conſtitution, Genius and Humour. Now 'tis eaſie to ſuppoſe a Man may abſtain from *ſuch*, for his own Eaſe, Health and Quiet's ſake. *Self-Love* will preſerve the Atheiſt from ſuch open and notorious Acts of Wickedneſs, as will expoſe him to the Capital Puniſhment of Human Laws; and which will endanger depriving him of his Being here, where he only propoſes to be happy. This Principle alſo of *Self-Love*, will hinder him from expoſing himſelf to Ignominy and Scandal; and will make him endeavour to keep fair in the Opinions of thoſe whoſe diſeſteem would give him a great degree of Unhappineſs. But it doth not in the leaſt follow from hence, that becauſe he is not guilty of *all manner*, or of *this* or *that* particular Vice, that therefore he is a good Moral Man, and guilty of *none at all:* It cannot be concluded from hence, that ſuch a Perſon will avoid committing any Fact, be it never ſo Wicked, when it is ſtript of all theſe Inconveniences, and can be done ſecretly, ſafely and ſecurely: when 'tis agreeable to his Conſtitution and Humour, faſhionable and gentile, and contributes very much to that kind of Satisfaction he is inclin'd to; for as one that had conſider'd this Point well, obſerves, *Self-Love, which like Fire covets to reſolve all things into it ſelf, makes Men they care not what Villany or what Impiety they Act, ſo it may but conduce to their own Advantage.* (Preface to *Great is* Diana *of the* Epheſians.) And indeed, if he be not abſolutely

lutely Stupid, and one that propoſes to himſelf no manner of End at all, he will certainly do this very thing: He will purſue and practiſe Indifferently ſuch kind of Deſigns and Actions, be they good or bad, as will give him as much Pleaſure and Happineſs as he can have here in this ſhort Life, where, Miſerable Wretch as he is, *he only hath any hope.* And nothing can nor will hinder ſuch a Perſon from endeavouring to do or obtain any thing he hath a Mind to, but the fear of being expoſed to Puniſhment and Miſery *here*, from thoſe among whom he lives. Now, this Conſideration can have no place in *ſecret* Actions, and conſequently nothing will hinder a Man of theſe abominable Principles from committing the moſt barbarous Villany that is conſiſtent with his Safety, and ſubſervient to his Deſires; that can be either concealed in Secreſie, or ſupported by Power. For, as to the *Principle of Honour*, that ſuch Men will pretend to be governed and guided by, and which they would ſet up to ſupply the Room of Conſcience and Religion; 'tis plain, that 'tis the verieſt Cheat in Nature: 'tis nothing but a meer abuſive Name, to gull the World into a Belief that they have ſome kind of Principle to act and proceed by, and which keeps them from doing *an Ill Thing*: Whereas the Atheiſt can have no Principle at all, but that ſordid one of *Self Love*; which will ſtill carry him to the perpetrating of any thing indifferently, according as it beſt conduces to his preſent Intereſt and Advantage. They deny that there are any Actions truly Good or Honourable, or Wicked and Baſe in themſelves; but that this is all owing to the peculiar Cuſtoms, Laws, and Conſtitutions

of Places and Countries: And that as *all Men* are, ſo *Actions* alſo, are naturally equal and alike: And how far ſuch Notions as theſe will carry Men, 'tis very eaſie both to *Imagine* and to *Obſerve*. One would think nothing could be more Noble, Honourable and Comely, than for a Man to ſtick firm and conſtant to thoſe Principles that he pretends to, and by no means whatever to be brought to abjure and deny them. *Sincerity* is ſo lovely and deſirable a Vertue, that it doth approve it ſelf, as it were naturally, to the reaſon of all Mankind: and 'tis equally Uſeful, nay, indeed Neceſſary, to the due Government of the World. But this Noble Virtue, ſo peculiar to a Man of True honour and greatneſs of Mind, the Atheiſt will practiſe no longer than it is for his *Intereſt* and *Advantage*, and while it is conſiſtent with his Safety. That Men may profeſs or deny any thing to ſave their Lives, is the avowed Principle of one of their great Writers. And the ſame is expreſly aſſerted in other words, even in leſſer Caſes than that of Danger of Death, by the Tranſlator of *Philoſtratus*'s Life of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, with a great Pretence to Wit and Humour. But if Men may Lye and Prevaricate from ſo baſe and abject a Principle as *Fear*, no doubt they may do ſo for *Intereſt* and *Advantage*, for that is certainly as good a ground, as Cowardlineſs and Baſeneſs; and then what becomes of this boaſted *Honour* that is ſo much talk'd of; this *greatneſs of Mind*, that will keep a Man from *doing* an *ill thing*. In reality, 'twill at laſt amount to no more than this, that he will forbear doing *an Ill Thing*, when he

he thinks it will *prove ill to him*: he will be Juſt, Honeſt and Sincere when he *don't dare* be otherwiſe, for fear of the Law, Shame, and Ignominy: For all Men of Atheiſtical Principles would be Knaves and Villains *if they durſt*, if they could do it ſafely and ſecurely: ſuch a Man ('tis like) ſhall return you a Bag of Money, or a rich Jewel you happen to depoſe in his Hands; but why is it? 'tis becauſe he *dares* not keep it and deny it; 'tis great odds but he is *diſcovered* and *expoſed* by this means; and beſides, 'tis Unfaſhionable and Ungenteel to be a Cheat in ſuch Caſes. But to impoveriſh a Family by Extravagance and Debauchery, to defraud Creditors of their juſt Debts, or Servants of their Wages, *to Cheat at Play*, to violate one's Neighbour's Bed to gratifie one's own Luſt, are things, which though to the full as Wicked and Unreaſonable in themſelves, are yet ſwallowed down as allowable enough, becauſe common and uſual, and which are not, the more is the pity, attended with that Scandal and Infamy that other Vices are. Thus 'tis very plain, that this pretended Principle of Honour in an Atheiſt or a Wicked Man, and this Obedience and Deference that he pretends to pay to the Laws of his Country, is a moſt *Partial* and *Changeable* thing, and vaſtly different from that true Honour and Bravery that is founded on the Eternal Baſis of Conſcience and Religion; 'tis an Airy Name that ſerves only to amuſe unthinking and ſhort-ſighted Perſons into a Belief, that he hath ſome kind of Principles that he will ſtick to; that ſo he may be thought fit to be *truſted, dealt* and *converſed withall* in the World.

And thus, I think, it is very clear and apparent that Wickedneſs naturally leads to Infidelity and Atheiſm, and Infidelity and Atheiſm to the Support and Maintenance of That: And that *it is the Wicked that will not ſeek after God, and whoſe thoughts are that there is no God.* Which was my Firſt Particular.

I come next to Conſider,

II. That Peculiar Kind of Wickedneſs which the Pſalmiſt here takes notice of, as the chief Ground from whence Infidelity and Atheiſm proceed: And that is *Pride. The Wicked, through the Pride of his Countenance will not ſeek after God, neither is God in all his Thoughts.*

And I queſtion not but this Vice of *Pride*, is generally the Concomitant of Infidelity, and the chief Ground from whence the Spirit of *Speculative Atheiſm* proceeds. When Men of proud and haughty Spirits lead ill Lives, as they very often do, they always endeavour to juſtifie themſelves in their Proceeding, be it never ſo Irregular and Abſurd, and never ſo contrary to the conſiderate Sentiments of all the reſt of the World. A Proud Man hates to acknowledge himſelf in an Errour, and to own that he hath committed a Fault: He would have the World believe that there is a kind of *Indefectibility* in his Underſtanding and Judgment, which ſecures him from being deceived and miſtaken like other Mortals. Whatever Actions therefore ſuch a Perſon commits, he would fain have appear reaſonable and juſtifiable. But he ſees plainly that he cannot make Wicked-

Wickedneſs and Immorality do ſo, as long as Religion ſtands its Ground in the World. The Sacred Scriptures are ſo plain and expreſs againſt ſuch a courſe of Life, that there is no avoiding being convicted and condemned while their Authority remains good: 'Tis impoſſible any way to reconcile a vicious Life to the Doctrine *there* delivered: And therefore he ſees plainly, That one that Profeſſes to believe the great Truths of Religion, and the Divine Authority of thoſe Sacred Books, and yet by his Practices gives the Lye to his Profeſſion, and while he acknowledges Jeſus Chriſt *in his Words, doth in his Works deny him*; he ſees, I ſay, that ſuch an one ſtands αὐτοκατάκριτος, Self-condemned, and can never acquit himſelf either to his own Conſcience, or to the Reaſon of Mankind. Now this is perfectly diſagreeable to the Genious and Humour of a Proud Man; he cannot bear to be thought in any reſpect Incoherent or Inconſiſtent with himſelf: And therefore having vainly tried to juſtifie himſelf in his Wickedneſs, by alledging the Examples of ſome good Men in Sacred Scripture, that have been guilty of great Sins, but whoſe Repentance he can by no means digeſt: And having alſo fruitleſsly endeavoured to rely on the *perverted Senſe* of ſome particular Texts of Scripture, which he knows are ſufficiently refuted by the *Analogy* of the whole; he finds at laſt that 'tis the beſt way to deny the Divine Authority of the Bible, and the Truth of all Revelation, and ſo boldly ſhake off at once all Obligation to the Rules of Piety and Virtue; and ſince Religion can't be wreſted ſo as to give an allowance to his way of living, he will take it

it quite away, Baniſh that and God Almighty out of the World, and *ſet up Iniquity by a Law.* And nothing can be more pleaſing and agreeable to the Arrogance of ſuch Men than this way of Proceeding: It gratifies an inſolent and haughty Spirit prodigiouſly, to do things out of the common Road; to pretend to be *Adept* in a Philoſophy that is as much *above* the reſt of Mankind's Notions, as 'tis *Contradictory* to it: to aſſume to himſelf a Power of ſeeing much farther into things than other Folk, and to penetrate into the deepeſt receſſes of Nature. (*a*) He would paſs for one of Nature's Cabinet Councellors, a Boſome Favourite that knows all the ſecret Springs of Action, and the firſt remote Cauſes of all Things. He pleaſes himſelf mightily to have diſcovered with what Ridiculous Bugbears the Generality of Mankind are awed and frighted; he can now look down (*b*) with a Scornful Pity on the poor groveling Vulgar, the Unthinking Mobb below, that are poorly enſlaved and terrified by the Fear of a God, and of *Ills to come they know not when nor where:* He deſpiſes ſuch dull Biggots as will be impoſed upon by Prieſts, and that will ſuperſtitiouſly abſtain from the Enjoyment of preſent Pleaſure, on account of ſuch idle Tales as the Comminations of Religion. And as he deſpiſes thoſe that are *not Wicked*, ſo he upbraids thoſe *that are ſo*, with inconſiſtency with their Principles and Profeſſion, and for doing the *ſame things that he doth*, when they have nothing to bear them out: And thus he doubly gratifies his Pride, by juſtifying himſelf, and condemning and

(*a*) Vid. Jul. Cæſ. Vanini Amphitheatr. in Titulo & Epiſt. Dedicator.

(*b*) *Deſpicere unde queas alios, paſſimq; videre*
Errare, atq; viam palantes quærere vitæ. Lucr. lib. 2.

and triumphing over others. Nay, the very Miſtakes and Errours of ſuch a Man, we are told, appear laudable and great to him, and he can pleaſe himſelf at laſt, with ſaying, *That he hath not Erred like a Fool, but* Secundum Verbum. *Vid.* Oracles of Reaſon, *p.* 92. When Men have a while enured themſelves to talk at this rate, and to blow themſelves up with ſuch loſty Conceits and Fancies, they grow by degrees more and more opinionated, and do dote more and more on their own dear Notions; and finding by this means quiet and eaſe in the Practice of their Sins, they at laſt degenerate ſo far as firmly to believe the Truth of what they perhaps at firſt advanced and talk'd only from a Spirit of Contradiction; and become ſo ſtupid and blind, as, like great Liars, to believe their own Figments and Inventions (*a*). To ſuch any Extravagant and Inconſiſtent Hypotheſis, ſo it do but claſh with Sacred Scripture, ſhall be no leſs than a real Demonſtration; a Bold and daring Falſity ſhall paſs for undoubted Truth; and a Prophane Jeſt, or a Scurrilous Reflection on the Character or Perſon of one in Holy Orders, ſhall be a ſufficient Refutation of the plaineſt Demonſtration he can bring againſt their Principles and Practices. For it is moſt certain, that though a Proud Man always think himſelf in the right, and arrogate to himſelf an Exemption from the common Frailties and Errours of Mankind; yet there is no body ſo frequently deceived and miſtaken, as he; for he doth ſo overeſtimate all his Faculties and Endowments, and is ſo much enamoured of, and Truſts ſo much to his own Quickneſs and Penetration, that he uſually Imagines

(*a*) Vid. *Great is Diana of the Epheſians.*

Imagines his Great Genius able to Maſter any thing without the ſervile fatigue of Pains and Study: and therefore he will never give himſelf Time ſeriouſly to examine into things, he ſcorns and hates the Drudgery of deeply revolving and comparing the *Idæas* of things in his Mind, but raſhly proceeds to Judgment and Determination on a very Tranſient and Superficial View: And there will he ſtick, be the Reſolution he is come to never ſo abſurd and Unaccountable; for he is as much above confeſſing an Errour in Judgment, as he is of Repenting of a Fault in Practice. And indeed, as the abſurd and ridiculous Paradoxes which Atheiſtical Writers maintain, ſhew their ſhallow inſight into things, and their Precipitancy in forming a Determination about them; ſo the Pride and Haughtineſs with which they deliver them, abundantly demonſtrates the True Spirit of ſuch Authors, and the Real Ground both of their Embracing and Maintaining their Opinions. *Plato* deſcribes the Atheiſts of his Age, to be a Proud, Inſolent, and Haughty ſort of Men, the Ground of whoſe Opinion was, he ſaith, ἀμαθεία μάλα χαλεπὴ, in reality, a *very miſchievous Ignorance*; though to the conceited Venders and Embracers of it Δοκεῖσα δὲ μεγίστη φρόνησις, καὶ σοφωτάτη πάντων λόγων. It appeared to be the *greateſt Wiſdom*, and the *Wiſeſt of all Opinions*. *Lactantius* tells us in his Diſcourſe, *De Ira Dei*, p. 729. *Oxon.* that the true Reaſon why *Diagoras Melius* and *Theodorus*, two of the Ancient Atheiſts denied a Deity was, *That they might gain the Glory of being the Authors of ſome new Opinion, contradictory to the common Notions of Mankind.* And of the former of theſe,

theſe, *Diagoras*, *Sextus Empiricus* acquaints us, That becauſe a certain perjured Perſon, *who had wrong'd him, lived unpuniſhed by the Gods, he was ſo enraged at it, that he undertook to maintain there were no Gods at all.* Lib. Adr. Mathem. Edit. *Genev.* 1621.

The like Pride and Arrogance *Lactantius* tells us he found in the two great Writers that appeared againſt Chriſtianity, in his time, in *Bithynia.* The former of theſe, who, 'tis probable, was the famous *Porphyry*, called himſelf *Antiſtes Philoſophiæ*, the Chief or Prince of Philoſophers; and ſaith *Lactantius*, *Neſcio utrum Superbius an Importunius, pretended to correct the blind Errors of Mankind, and to guide Men into the True Way; He could not bear, that Unskilful and Innocent Perſons ſhould be enſlaved by the Cheats of, and become a Prey to, Crafty and Deſigning Men.* Lib. de Juſtit. p. 420, 421. *Oxon.*

With the like Aſſurance do the Modern Writers of this kind expreſs themſelves: And though they have in reality very little or nothing New, but only the Arguments of the Ancients a little varied and embelliſhed, (as I ſhall have occaſion to obſerve hereafter more at large,) yet they all ſet up for new Lights, and mighty Diſcoverers of the Secrets of Nature and Philoſophy; and all of them aſſume the Glory of firſt leading Men into the way of Truth, and delivering them out of the dark mazes of Vulgar Errors. This was the pretence of *Vanini*, who was burnt for Atheiſm at *Tholouſe*, *A. D.* 1619. *whoſe Mind*, he ſays, *grew more and more ſtrong,*

healthful and robuſt, as he exerciſed it in ſearching out the Secrets of that Supreme Philoſophy, which is wholly unknown to the common and ordinary Rank of Philoſophers: And this, he ſaith, *will ſoon be diſcovered, by the peruſal of his* Phyſico-Magicum, *which was now to ſee the Light. Vid.* Vanini Amphitheatr. in Epiſt. Dedicat.

Animus tamen in Supremæ & vulgo Philoſophantibus incognitæ Philoſophiæ Arcanis inveſtigandis validior factus & robuſtior; ut Phyſico-Magicum noſtrum, quod mox ex umbrâ in lucem prodibit pellegens, æqua poſteritas facilè eſt Judicatura.

After the ſame manner do *Machiavel*, *Spinoza*, *Hobbs*, *Blount*, and all the late Atheiſtical Writers, deliver themſelves; Inſtances of which, I think, I need not ſtay to give, ſince 'tis conſpicuous through the whole courſe of their Writings, and, no doubt, taken notice of by every Reader; only of the firſt of theſe, *viz. Machiavel*, I cannot but take notice; that *Vanini* himſelf ſaith, that 'twas his *Pride* and Covetouſneſs that made him deny the Truth of the Miracles recorded in Sacred Scripture. *Amphitheatr.* p. 51. Edit. *Lugduni*, 1615.

And as the *Writings*, ſo the *Diſcourſes* of theſe Gentlemen do equally diſcover this Pride and Vanity: for they do uſually deliver themſelves with ſuch a ſcornful and contemptuous Air, when they either endeavour to eſtabliſh their *own*, or to overthrow their *Adverſaries* Arguments, as ſufficiently ſhews the Propriety and Truth of the Pſalmiſt's Obſervation here, that 'tis *through the pride of his countenance, that the wicked will not ſeek after God.* The LXXII. indeed render it, κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ: *Through the*

the abundance of his wrath: and therein they are followed by the vulgar Latin. As if the Wicked were angry againſt God, and enraged at his Preſidency over Humane Affairs: as if they fretted under, and quarelled at the Severity of his Laws and Government, and ſcorned to apply themſelves to him by Prayer, and to ſubmit to him by Obedience. But though this may be a good ſence of the words; and though, I doubt not, a ſtubborn Frowardneſs and Perverſeneſs of our Wills againſt the Will of God, may be a frequent cauſe and ground of Infidelity: yet our *Engliſh* Tranſlation appears to me to be much better warranted from the *Hebrew*; for there it is properly, *through the Elevation of his Noſe or Face.* Which, truly, is very emphatical, and expreſſes ſuch a proud and ſcornful geſture of Face, as is the natural Indication of the Internal Haughtineſs of a Man's Mind; or as the *Targum*, on this place, render it, *of the arrogance of his Spirit.* Such a Turn and Air of Countenance as argues a proud contempt of all the reſt of Mankind, who trot on in the common road, believe and worſhip a God, and poorly ſubmit to be governed by his Laws and Precepts.

And thus having diſpatched my Two firſt Particulars, and ſhewed, That *Wickedneſs* and *Pride* are two great Cauſes of Infidelity and Atheiſm; I ſhould now proceed to ſpeak to the Third thing obſervable in my Text, *viz.*

III. The great Charge which the Pſalmiſt brings againſt the wicked Perſon here mentioned, *That he will not ſeek after God; neither is God in all his Thoughts.*

But this I muſt leave for my next Diſcourſe, and ſhall now Conclude with a word or two by way of Application.

Since the Caſe ſtands thus, That *Wickedneſs* in general, and *Pride* in particular, do ſo naturally lead to *Infidelity* and *Atheiſm*; and that 'tis hardly poſſible to imagine a Man can entertain ſuch an Opinion without them: Let every one then, that hath any Inclination or Temptation that way, ſeriouſly examine his own Mind, whether he be not prejudiced towards it by ſome *vitious Deſires* and *Affections*; whether he doth not heartily *wiſh* that there were no God nor Religion; whether he hath not, by his paſt Actions, really loaded himſelf with *guilt*, and therefore is diſturbed in his Mind with the apprehenſion, that the Divine Puniſhment will overtake him, and light upon him, for his Sins: Let him ſearch diligently whether he hath not recourſe to Infidelity, as to an *Opiate* in this caſe, to *allay* the Pains of his Conſcience, and to *compoſe* the Diſorder of his guilty Mind, and to gain, as it were, an *Inſenſibility* in Sinning. For if the caſe be thus, 'tis plain, he is not free, and at liberty, to make a juſt Judgment of the Truth of Things; he is already a Party, and much more enclined to one ſide of the Queſtion than to the other; and conſequently, he will pitch on that as Truth, which he would have to be ſo. But this is certainly a very partial way of proceeding, and ſuch as no wiſe Man would uſe in a matter of ſo very great moment, to engage one's ſelf raſhly in a Determination, before a thorough and careful Examination of the Evidence on both ſides: This is to look on things in

in a falſe Light, through coloured Glaſſes, through Diſeaſed and Icterical Eyes; and then to believe them to be *in reality*, what our depraved and prejudicate Apprehenſions make them.

The Enemies to Religion ſay, That the Preachers of it are not to be minded; the Arguments they bring are all *forced* and *ſtrained*, becauſe 'tis their Trade, and they get Money by it; and their Craft obliges them to cry out, *Great is* Diana *of the Epheſians!* I hope therefore this being ſo *Precarious* and *Partial* a way of Proceeding, to ſubſcribe to Religion by Implicit Faith, and to take it up upon truſt from thoſe, whoſe Intereſt (they ſay) it is to propagate it in the World: I hope, I ſay, that Men will not act ſo on the other hand, and embrace Atheiſm and Infidelity on the ſame *Precarious Grounds*. I hope all ſuch Perſons can clearly approve themſelves to be *truly Virtuous and Moral* in their Inclinations and Practices; and are ſure that they have no ſtrong Inclinations to ſuch Actions as the World calls *Vicious*. For if they have, and do take real Pleaſure in the Practice of Wickedneſs, 'tis plain that they muſt be Prejudiced and Bigotted to their Luſts and Humours; they cannot be *Free-thinkers* in the Caſe; the Cloggs of ill *Cuſtom*, and a looſe Education bear them down, and they cannot ſhake them off. Their preſent Intereſt influences and governs their Belief, and enſlaves and Tyrannizes over their Reaſon.

Let them conſider impartially the Arguments for Infidelity, and they will find *them* all *forced* and *ſtrained Paradoxes*, Invented by *Sceptical* and *Canting Philo-*

Philosophers, a *Crafty* and *Designing* sort of Men, who set up Atheism *because they Get by it*, and whose *Interest* it is that there should be no God and Religion.

Let not therefore Men be so stupid and blind as to talk of Prejudices on the side of Religion, and never perceive that there are any at all on that of Infidelity. If they scorn to take up Religion on trust, without examining into its Grounds and Reasons; for their Own sakes let them be as Cautious and Inquisitive on the other hand, and not run Hoodwinked into Eternal Destruction, by subscribing to Atheism in hast, and without that previous Consideration and Regard, which so great and important an Affair requires: For if they will but strip themselves of those Prejudices which arise from their Vices, and avoid being impetuously born down by their depraved Inclinations, they will soon perceive that the Grounds and Principles of Infidelity are abundantly too precarious to afford them any thing like a *Demonstrative assurance* of the Falsity of Religion: *Without which*, surely no Man of Sense, and that can think at all, will ever run the hazard of Damnation.

FINIS.

221748